

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 HA-05 ISO-00 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 022049Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1283
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2390

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CS
SUBJ: PLUTARCO HERNANDEZ PARDONED

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.
AFTER WEEKS OF PUBLIC DEBATE AND MEDIA
COMMENTARY, COSTA RICAN CABINET 1 JUNE ISSUED PARDON FOR COSTA
RICAN CITIZEN FSLN LEADER PLUTARCO HERNANDEZ. AFTER RELEASE
HERNANDEZ SAID HE WOULD VISIT A SON IN USSR AND LATER JOIN FSLN IN
NICARAGUA.

2. HERNANDEZ CASE HAD BECOME A LOCAL CIVIL RIGHTS/POLITICAL ISSUE
WITH STRONG ANTI-SOMOZA GOVERNMENT OVERTONES. NUMBER OF PROMINENT
COSTA RICANS, NOT ALL OF THEM LEFTISTS HAD SPOKEN OUT IN FAVOR OF
HERNANDEZ. MANY OTHERS, ECHOING COSTA RICAN SUPREME COURT'S 28
MAY REJECTION OF REQUEST FOR JUDICIAL RELEASE ORDER, NOTED THAT
HERNANDEZ HAD BEEN A FUGITIVE FROM COSTA RICAN JUSTICE SINCE 1971
AFTER HAVING BEEN CONVICTED FOR PARTICIPATING IN A RAID ON A POLICE
STATION TO FREE AN FSLN FIGURE. IN THAT RAID ONE COSTA RICAN
CIVIL GUARD MEMBER WAS KILLED, ANOTHER WOUNDED.

3. SINCE HIS CAPTURE IN APRIL HERNANDEZ HAD SPOKECZOUT FROM JAIL
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AGAINST SOMOZA GOVERNMENT; HIS STATEMENTS RECEIVED WIDE MEDIA
COVERAGE. THIS PUBLICITY, THE WAY THE GOCR HAS HANDLED THE CASE,
AND THE ATTENDANT ANTI-SOMOZA FEELING IN THE MEDIA IS OFFERED AS
PROOF BY NICARAGUAN EMBASSY HERE THAT COSTA RICANS CANNOT BE
TRUSTED IN FSLN MATTERS. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: THE ONLY MILDLY SURPRISING ELEMENT

OF CARAZO GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO RID ITSELF OF PLUTARCO HERNANDEZ WAS THE SPEED WITH WHICH THIS DETERMINATION WAS REACHED. AS VERIFIED IN SEPARATE REPORTING, CARAZO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WERE CONVINCED THAT WITH WEAKENED STATE OF SECURITY FORCES FOLLOWING CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT, THEY WOULD BE UNABLE TO RESPOND TO ANY RETALIATION THAT MIGHT BE FORTHCOMING (BE IT BY FSLN OR COSTA RICAN LEFTISTS) FOR KEEPING HERNANDEZ JAILED. NEW GOVERNMENT, NOT UNLIKE THE PREVIOUS ONE, HAS DEALT WITH SUCH A THREAT BY AVOIDING IT. AT SAME TIME, EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT GOCR IS NOW ATTEMPTING TO HAVE KNOWN FSLN LEADERS IN COSTA RICA EXILED TO PANAMA AND VENEZUELA. THE RATIONALE, AS EXPLAINED TO EMBOFF BY FORMIN OFFICIAL, IS TO REMOVE POSSIBLE SOURCES OF CONFLICT WITH SOMOZA GOVERNMENT. END CONFIDENTIAL.

KILDAY

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